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Anya Gallaccio at Lehmann Maupin

By Maura Reilly

One of the things that has always separated Anya Gallaccio from her Brit-pack contemporaries is her celebration of organic processes. Painting walls with chocolate, decorating galleries with flower carpets, constructing a salt tower to be eaten away by the tide, installing a 34-ton block of ice in a pumping station—these monuments to ephemerality were meant to disintegrate melt or rot, leaving behind only a memory. Whereas Damien Hirst's fish preserved in formaldehyde and Marc Quinn's blood frozen in refrigerated tanks arrest the processes of decay, Gallaccio's works, like *memento mori*, remind viewers that death is part of life.

Her latest show, "Blessed," continued to explore such ideas; however, it also represented a major departure for Gallaccio. She produced, for the first time, works that are "haveable" (to use her term), and the new pieces that resulted from this surrender to market realities differ both conceptually and formally from her previous work.

Many of the sculptural objects in the show embodied a Pop sensibility. In one corner, leaning against a wall, was a tiny bronze cast of a twig with berries; nearby, on the floor, were several life-size bronze casts of lima beans and their shells; in the back room were several cast-bronze potatoes, replete with sprouts. An earlier Gallaccio would have presented real potatoes and beans, leaving them to rot over the course of the exhibition. But now, these organic objects are suspended in time. They are secondary, solid objects based on quotidian originals, like Jasper Johns's ale can.

The most astounding piece on exhibit was a bronze apple tree with truncated limbs to which were affixed 400 real, rotting apples, which attracted fruit flies. The object provoked a slew of associations. Not only does one detect a nod to Cezanne and to New York's nickname but, given Gallaccio's reverence for *Arte Povera*, a reference as well to Giuseppe Penone, who has exhibited bronze trees with cast leaves since 1999. In Gallaccio's tree, the inanimate meets the animate, creating an uncanny quality that will unfortunately disappear upon purchase, when the real apples are to be replaced by ceramic ones.

The overall strength of the exhibition (as is the case with most Gallaccio shows) was the experience of having one's olfactory, aural and visual senses stimulated all at once. In

addition to the lingering odor of the scorched plywood floors (the artist's decision), the pungent scent of rotting apples and the buzz of fruit flies were notable. Like most artists working with impermanent materials, Gallaccio has decided to produce salable objects. But one is left wondering if her innovative, signature style has been compromised in the process.